

Saturday, October 8, 2016

2:00 P.M.

The Fight for the Cornfield



This scenario will attempt to simulate the events that took place at approximately 2:00 P.M. on Wednesday, October 8, 1862. While General Daniel Donelson's brigade was moving forward into attack position, Brigadier General William R. Terrill's Union Brigade was in the process of forming their line on the "Open Knob". Maney's Brigade, assisted by Wharton's Cavalry, attacked with vigor, rolling over Terrill's regiments as they arrived on the field piecemeal. Union Brigadier General James S. Jackson, the Commander of the 10th Division was killed on the open knob. The first Union position on the Open Knob was overrun and the Confederates moved up their artillery as their infantry line moved forward into the cornfield. Here, the Confederates met Colonel John Starkweather's veteran brigade. Starkweather's only new regiment, the 21st Wisconsin, was positioned in the cornfield when the Confederates attacked. They were quickly overwhelmed, losing all their field officers. The retreating Confederates were pressed across the Dixville Road and a Hand-to-hand fight erupted on the front slope in front of Starkweather's cannon. The Union forces were driven from the hill, but regained it in a counter-attack. General Terrill was also killed on the reverse slope of "Starkweather Hill". With the deaths of General Jackson, General Terrill, and Colonel Webster, the Union 10th Division lost all its commanders. This was the only time in the Civil War that this happened to a Division in a single battle.

The corn planted in the cornfield is an heirloom corn breed, developed in Wisconsin in 1847. This breed of corn, Wisconsin Red Dent, chosen and planted by the Friends of Perryville was done to honor the Wisconsin regiments involved in the Battle of Perryville.

"Bayonet thrusts and blows from the butts of our guns crashed on all sides. We would drive them back a few yards, then we would in turn be driven. The very leaden hail, like rain-drops, and as thick, was poured into our very faces, fairly hurling us back."
— Sam Watkins, 1st Tennessee Infantry.

"I did not go far, however, before a musket or rifle ball struck me in my left leg just below the calf, breaking it, and passing clear through. I of course fell, and that finished my fighting. Shortly afterward, the rebels passed me by. One of them cut off my cartridge box and took it away from me. The shot and shell flew thick over my head as I lay there, making it very unsafe."
— Josiah Ayre, 105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

"The 79th [PA] and 24th [IL] were all enveloped in smoke; the 1st Wisconsin I could not see on account of the corn. I looked for the front. All at once I saw a rebel flag, that is, the upper part of it above the cornstalks and not far away either. I sat down on my right knee and said as loud as I could: 'Boys be ready! They are coming!' They got on their knees; some looked forward, some back at me. Instinctively I yelled: 'Why don't we fire?' I looked to the right, [the] Colonel was not there; I looked to the left, [the] Major was not there. I leveled my rifle at some butternut colored jacked which I saw among the stalks. Instantly the Company followed suit. The Rebs staggered a little and in their turn saluted."

– John Henry Otto, 21st Wisconsin Infantry.

Union Regiments Portrayed:

105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry

21st Wisconsin Infantry

US Artillery - Stone's 1st KY Battery

US Cavalry – 2nd Kentucky Cavalry

Confederate Regiments Portrayed:

1st Tennessee

6th Tennessee

9th Tennessee

27th Tennessee

41st Georgia

CS Artillery - Turner's Mississippi Battery

CS Cavalry - 1st Kentucky Cavalry